

Lajos Hüse, Erzsébet Balogh, Nóra Barnucz,  
Mihály Fónai and Erika Zolnai

## **The Discourse of Social Exclusion and its Benefits for the Majority**

Several factors create and maintain social inequality across generations. Certain social strata and individuals can gain from inequality (Gans, 1992), or they can obtain more favourable positions in socio-economic competition. Thus, it is in the best interest of some to maintain inequality systems. These interests can be realized – among others – through the strategy of exclusion. This is how exclusion becomes the means of both its own preservation and reproduction.

This is why exclusion and being excluded are emphasized among the causes of inequality, because it is not only a cause but a means for sustaining inequality. Exclusion manifests in well-defined, complex behaviour that separates it from the other (cultural, material) causes of inequality. It is also typical of exclusion that through the development of negative stereotypes and stigmatization, it manifests as well in situations where the characters are well-meaning, not intentionally exclusive at all, and are not aware that with the inclusion of the widespread stereotypes, their behaviour and communication become exclusive.

The term “social exclusion” was first used by Lenoir (1974) in his study titled *Les Exclus*. In this work he defined a process in which certain disadvantaged groups fall out of the social network, so exclusion primarily means exclusion from the social-protective system. Social exclusion is related to alienation and to being disenfranchised; however, social status, qualifications and quality of life combine as well to influence access to certain opportunities (Szalai 2002). People or groups who are excluded by other individuals or groups can even be consciously the subjects of the social exclusion (e.g., the Jewish population in Nazi Germany). There can also be individuals or groups who intentionally exclude themselves from society (e.g., certain closed communities in a given society).

During the last two decades the Hungarian middle class – mainly their lower strata – have increasingly experienced a decline in their existential security and a narrowing of their perspectives. This negative tendency determines the well-being of the affected, in spite of the fact that the living standards for a majority of them have improved in comparison with the period of the socialist regime. Most people measure the improvement of their own standard of living by the quantity and value of their possessions and real estate (a Western car, bigger house, etc.)

and by an increase of their family's consumption. In light of this, the majority has intensively experienced relative poverty. Its cause is that their reference groups, i.e., those who have attained higher status, have been significantly more successful in this field (even more better and expensive cars, much bigger and luxurious homes, branded household items, etc.).

While the winners of the political changes have dynamically "pulled ahead" of the middle class, the significant majority of society has spectacularly slid down. They have suffered from the narrowing and disappearance of job opportunities; their living conditions have plummeted and they have become impoverished. The socio-economic gap opening up below the middle class has swallowed millions from among those who had lived on nearly the same level as they had lived before the political change. This gap means a growing threat to the middle class to pull them down as well.

This process, together with other negative tendencies (an increase in living expenses, the tensions resulting from attaining a standard of living maintained by loans and the ensuing credit crisis, labour market volatility, etc.) *has led to the devaluation of the middle class*. Wide sections of society have been forced to utilize all of their resources so that the next generation will have a chance to regain the position that was lost – *and one of the main arenas of this struggle is the school*. At the same time, the efforts of the middle class are directed towards distancing themselves from the poorer ones – while exploiting the opportunities given by the institutional systems in order to deepen the ethnic and cultural contents related to deep poverty, using a moral basis for the *ideology of exclusion*.

Since a social inequality system provides tangible benefits to a significant part of society, the beneficiaries, either consciously or unconsciously, are involved in the maintaining it, for example, by supporting a public education system "ruled" by the norms of the middle class, as it gives them the possibility to maintain a situation where they do not have to compete for jobs with a major layer of society (Szalai, 2010). These interests can be enforced through the strategy of exclusion, which simultaneously becomes the means of both its preservation and reproduction.

### **Stereotype, prejudice, discrimination, exclusion**

Up until now, we have introduced exclusion as a "preemptive strike" against the competition in the fight for social resources. It suggests that the root cause of exclusion is the finite amount of resources, the possibility to accumulate these resources, and the consequences of their accumulation. That is, the more successful a person is in accumulating resources, the more successful he or she will be in all other aspects of life. A consequence of this is that it is true that as resources

become scarce, competition becomes stronger, but its reverse is not true. An increase in resources does not necessarily lessen competition, as accumulation is an adaptive behaviour.

Social differences make rivalry between competitors unequal. Although this inequality means that layers of society or groups with higher status or with more power can exclude the weaker ones from competition using various means, rivalry for resources is not the only explanation for exclusion.

There is another conceptual scheme that helps to understand exclusion. This is the scheme of how people (and living things in general) treat the “stranger” or “Other.” Strangers or Others themselves primarily mean a threat to “Us” because we do not know them. We do not have sufficient information to predict their actions with certainty. They are not subject to the rules and norms, they can do anything. But what will they do? Will they attack? Will they cooperate with us? And what will we have to do? Will we have to attack them and take from them what they possess? Or shall we cooperate with them?

Answers to these questions are sorely needed to counteract the anxiety caused by the strangers. The answers are provided by the stereotypes relating to the Other. *Stereotypes* are beliefs that are created about certain social groups in such a way that certain typical (or considered to be typical) characteristics are attributed to given groups and one’s own feelings that are connected to them. On the basis of acquired stereotypes, opinions can be formed about strange groups and about the well-identified members of these groups. “*Identification*” is a key concept. The more clearly you can tell that somebody is the member of a group, the faster and stronger their appearance can trigger the stereotype. Although the role of positive stereotypes cannot be neglected, this study focuses on negative stereotypes and on the negative feelings related to them: aversion, disgust, fear and hatred (Fiske, 1998; Denmark, 2010).

*Prejudice* – the positive or negative evaluation of a social group and its group members – goes a step beyond stereotype. While stereotypes refer to the characteristics of a group, prejudice evaluates. Stereotype is a **statement**; prejudice is – *nomen est omen* – a **judgement**. These judgements are formulated with unquestioned power and have deep roots in personality (ibid.).

If the individual has easily recallable knowledge about the other group and this knowledge elicits feelings (stereotype), and if the individual makes a judgment about a certain group without any examination (prejudice) and these are negative, then it is a logical step for that individual to feel a strong urge to protect himself from that group. Negative thoughts and feelings motivate individuals to specific actions, and these actions are called *discrimination*. Discrimination includes all positive or negative forms of behaviour (even speech, as speech, too, is a form of behaviour!) that are directed to a social group and its members (ibid.).

One of the extreme forms of negative discriminative behaviour (protective or aggressively protective) is *exclusion*, a sort of “preventive” discrimination, which serves as a means to initiate inequality. Exclusion manifests in well-defined, complex behaviour that separates it from other (cultural, material) causes of inequality. It is typical to exclusion – which can be easily deduced from the above – that negative stereotypes, through the development of stigmatization, can manifest *even in such situations where the characters are well-meaning, not exclusive at all and are not aware that with the inclusion of widespread stereotypes their behaviour and communication become exclusive.*

Discrimination can have other causes than those already mentioned. Another, rather popular explanation approaches the topic from economic rationality. Employers who engage in economic rationality while judging expected performance use a statistical filter when recruiting applicants to jobs that require only lower education and offer less lucrative profit because it is not profitable (costs more) to apply individual selection (done by tests, personal interviews, references).

If the known statistical data show that a suitable workforce is less likely to be found within a separated group, then the total disregard of that group – and thus the lack of searching for and employing suitable workers from this group – will result in less cost than spending resources evaluating members of it. “*Even employers who are free from prejudices should take into consideration whether it is worth running an expensive human resource apparatus, if they are able – with considerable safety – to filter candidates in advance on the basis of external signs (e.g., gender, age, ethnic affiliation), even if they might make mistakes,*” writes Kertesi (2000).

Nevertheless, economic rationality is applicable not only to the economy and the labour market. This same statistic-based rationality of consideration can strengthen everyday prejudice and discrimination as well, since on a statistical basis, it seems to be more profitable to keep ourselves away from every member of a group that seems to be dangerous than to evaluate every individual occasion, and to trust problems rooted from unfounded trust, as the benefit of founded trust can be pocketed so rarely. The process seems to be rational – at least in the light of stereotypes. In fact, in the statistic filter “apparatus” individual experience, real observations and prejudice mix seamlessly, so one cannot be certain that the use of the statistic filter is really rational.

### **Faith in a fair world and prejudice**

Negative stereotypes and exclusive behaviour are further strengthened by a uniquely human attribute. According to Lerner’s theory (1980), people have a strong tendency to see *the world as being fair*. If the world is fair, they can trust

that “everybody gets what they deserve and everybody deserves what they get.” According to this theory, the individual can feel safe and can be relaxed about the future. A consequence of faith in a fair world is that the individual *devalues the victims of real social injustice* and turns a blind eye to injustice – as, according to the above logic, in a fair world injustice can happen only to those who deserve it. Individuals use this conviction to *protect themselves from the anxiety* that they may suffer injustice, since they would not deserve it.

The concept of faith in the fairness of the world can result in a person claiming that he or she has no prejudices (as he/she is a good person), but he or she must say that those who are in question (Gypsies, the Jews, foreigners, women, homosexuals, mall rats, the homeless, demonstrating university students, drug abusers, liberals, rockers, etc.) really are as we know them (and here he/she lists some common stereotypes and prejudices), because if they were not like that their situation would be different.

According to the system justification theory, since people tend to see the world as fair, they consider the social, economic and political conditions fair as well (Jost & Hunyady, 2002) and thus ideologically support the existing system. Negative stereotypes about disadvantaged groups therefore justify the fairness of the system. When assumptions are used to blame the excluded – the victims of the social system – ingrained beliefs and negative prejudices come together to form a coherent social ideology: *the ideology of exclusion*.

According to Fiske and her colleagues (2002), stereotypes about different social groups are organized in two basic dimensions: aspects related to competence and success and those related to friendliness (warmth of feelings) and social-moral judgement.

Table 1: Dimensions of Stereotypes

		Competence	
		Low	High
Warmth	High	PATERNALISTIC PREJUDICE	ADMIRATION
		Low status, not competitive Feeling: Compassion, sympathy Who: the elderly, the disabled, housewives	High status, not competitive Feeling: pride, admiration Who: ingroup, allies
	Low	CONTEMPTUOUS PREJUDICE	ENVIOUS PREJUDICE
		Low status, competitive Feeling: contempt, disgust, anger, resentment, blame Who: poor people, welfare recipients, Gypsies	High status, competitive Feeling: envy, jealousy Who: rich people, the Jews, successful Gypsies

Source: Fiske, et al. (2006).

To examine the bias types designated by the above dimensions in the dimensions of status and competition, the characteristics applied to the losers in the social systems are sharply defined. The given individual has low status compared to his or her own group, but has contemptuous, even hostile prejudices towards the competitive groups. It shows, as has been mentioned previously, the attitude of the sinking middle class towards those who have already slid down and who compete with them for workplaces and social resources. When the main question is what the government should do with the scarce resources available, prejudices colour the discussion about, for example, social supports.

Another phenomenon that has even more profound effects can also be described using Fiske and her colleagues' model. The policy of equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups itself – be it on the labour market or the educational one – does not result in a more fair society in and of itself and does not decrease prejudices against the disadvantaged. Let's take a look at what happens when groups struck by contemptuous prejudices manage to overcome their disadvantage, e.g., through supported, assisted, integrated, etc., participation (which should be an admirable goal) and achieve higher status. In this case they end of facing envious prejudice, arising from the same breeding ground of the ideology of exclusion and hatred. A further consequence is that when any particular person with a social or political platform would like to increase admiration of themselves within their own camp, there is a temptation to obtain such support and admiration by appealing to prejudice, an activity which is all too simple with today's means of mass communication.

With further refinement of the above-mentioned concepts we can state the hypothesis that as inequality and insecurity increase in a given society, the motivation for system justification increases as well, since elevated anxiety can be alleviated in this manner. Furthermore, if competition increases and (or) solidarity decreases, contemptuous and envious prejudice are strengthened. Now, however, it is not this hypothesis that is being further investigated, but rather how an ideology of exclusion derived from system justification and contemptuous prejudice works.

## Research

A Hungarian exclusion-research study conducted in 2008 examined the strength of communication used to reinforce the ideology of exclusion against the Roma by the majority of the society (Hüse, 2008). When the ideology of exclusion is a general, ubiquitous, all-reaching ideological system, experiences are filtered through attitudes and sometimes censored. The ideology of exclusion reaches different social groups, but as these groups can be characterised by different interests, it can be assumed that the excluding ideology encourages different

behaviours. During interviews in focal groups data was collected from three social groups – 30 people altogether – and was subsequently analyzed. In addition, material from an earlier focal group interview with Roma employees who were public workers was re-analyzed and included in the results.

The methods of the focal group *interview analysis* included traditional content analysis and partly discursive psychological methods. Discursive psychology is generally a constructionist approach and its essence is that the thoughts deriving from discourse analysis are applied to some aspects of social-psychology. *Discursive psychology considers speech and text as social exercises* and as it is usually practiced in psychological studies that investigate the relationship between the world and the mind in a way as if it were a discursive topic – as an important thing for the participants, as the matter of speech, the categories of speech, the rhetoric of speech, the actual interactional aspects (Tileaga, 2005).

One group of participants consisted of workers who are typically members of the lower-middle class with secondary education qualification, whose labour market situation is uncertain and whose income is scarcely enough to make a living. This group constitutes those who compete with the excluded groups, particularly with the Roma. They can be called “those who compete with Roma,” “those who are threatened with sliding down” and characterized as “anxious.” The ideology of exclusion that legitimizes and fixes patterns of inequality and unequal power relations was the most prominent in this focal group. In the interviews with the other two groups in the research that included non-competing (well-qualified) workers and employers, slight prejudice appeared. In many of their responses paternalist prejudice was observed, confirming the theory of Fiske and her colleagues (2002).

The secondary analysis of the focal group of the excluded Roma explored the communication of the ideology of exclusion. The excluded were characterized by a certain degree of acceptance of the ideology which resulted in resignation and despair. This result, too, supported the observation that the existing (unfair) system is often justified by groups with low status as they accept the views and ideologies that justify it. Justifying the system and the social (ideological, institutional) pressure to support its justification are sometimes so strong that the members of the disadvantaged groups resign themselves to accepting views (and stereotypes) that conflict with their own interests (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

### **The influence of the discourse of exclusion on the excluded Roma**

Generally it can be said that Roma workers consider their own situation as extremely hopeless. Their narratives and personal stories are permeated by stories

of failure heard from others and these stories reinforce their own experiences of failure. For them it is true hopelessness, a kind of *pit-perspective* from which there is no escape, where even the rim of the pit is beyond their reach.

*Happiness is in the grave. Here in Hungary happiness probably will never be.*

Adult Roma workers are unskilled; the vast majority have not even completed elementary school. These absolutely unskilled workers are able to find jobs only in a very narrow segment of the labour market. The black economy (typically agriculture and the building industry) provides a slight possibility to earn a living but places them in a totally vulnerable position. The presently much criticized benefit system works as a trap as it provides only intermittent labour market presence for the Roma in public work programs, and, in addition to the use of economic survival techniques and entering the black economy, it removes Roma workers from the open labour market (Kemény & Janky 2003). Characteristic to both community work and black market work (illegal employment) is a low income that is often only temporary. Prejudice generally makes the situation of the Roma workers even more difficult, and sometimes impossible. Their own experiences are felt like harsh slaps to the face:

*If you go to an interview at a factory they ask about your origin. I say I am a Hungarian citizen. This is not what they have asked! Then they ask you what your origin is again...if [somebody] says Roma, then they say the job has already been filled.*

*It doesn't matter if we want a profession that is good if they look at us and they say that we are not needed. On one hand, what we want is in vain. We want and would like to break out when they press us. We climb in vain because we would climb...*

It is well worth looking closely at the communication of exclusion. The person relates a fact when he speaks about the recurring experiences – “we are not needed,” “what we want is in vain” – while during the interview there were several occasions when members of the focal group (including the quoted interviewee as well) speak about ways of climbing or breaking out. However, even in the same interview, the personal experience of holding on is overridden by the depressing community experience of exclusion.

It is very easy to accept the prejudiced way of thinking but this identification leads to the loss of the internal energy and to a helpless state, where the individual closes himself to opportunities that he thinks (and confirmed by the others to be a legitimate value judgement) to be unreachable.

*The worst is that we have to prove ourselves three times as much as the average person. One reason is because people are afraid of us ...I have already asked why they think they have to be afraid and unfortunately the truth is that they are right on a certain level. Because if I see things from outside then what do people learn here? Nothing.*



Persons who mediate play a key role in the state of exclusion, for example, when a person who knows the problems but at the same times enjoys a position on the beneficial side of the target group (i.e., who enjoys high prestige, is a good-looking, charismatic figure of the majority) acts as a bridge over the obstacles so that the target groups, who are limited in opportunities, can cross over it to workplaces. Thus, the solution comes from the outside, sometimes in the form of a guarantee or intercession on their behalf, while the excluded (who have already accepted the message of the discourse of exclusion) sink into the paralyzed state of the expectation of a miracle. An interesting feature of this intercessor/guarantor role is that in the case of the Roma groups (including mainly Roma orphans) the question arises, "Can there be a 'Hungarian' who will stand for the Roma?" While the Roma focal group could imagine a foreigner in this role, they would never imagine a Roma like themselves playing it!

### **The discourse of exclusion among the majority workers**

The research included a majority of workers in a competitive situation. The two worker focal groups consisted of members of the ethnic majority, lower middle-class workers, and those working or seeking a job and/or studying in order to strengthen their labour market positions.

The basic phenomenon that separates the two groups is contact with the Roma. One of the groups only occasionally had contact with Roma on the street or through their children at school, and only one of their members worked with Roma.

Several members of the other group worked with Roma and had met Roma as clients. From the point of view of the discourse of exclusion, it became clear during the research that working together determines that where such a relationship exists the exclusion is weaker or in many cases undergoes a transformation from prejudice to a paternalistic view.

This study focuses on and summarizes the analysis of the interview with the group that applied a strong level of exclusion.

In this group, the unanimous opinion was that institutional integration is not good; it causes more harm than benefit. Their arguments initially were rather academic, with the thought of exclusion even hidden behind a reference to certain experts. Experts (especially if they have an academic degree) can be accepted as an authentic source and information from an authentic source does not need to be examined with a critical eye. This information does not need to match their already existing knowledge or worldview; they simply have to accept it as the only reality. It is true even if the authentic quoted source has been distorted or

fragmented, or if it is taken out of context and as a result the original intent is changed to an entirely contradictory statement (Pratkanis and Aronson, 1992).

Based on “the opinions of the experts” the interviewed take sides against integration more openly:

*Integration is not good. So... I have to pay the piper... I was very humanitarian concerning the Roma question until I started to teach. I was for integrating them and things like this. Only when I got in personal contact with them and I was not able to have a normal class with them in it did I start to sometimes say that there was something wrong, and not necessarily only with the kids. I never only look at the children. It is totally the same no matter who the child is, whether they are Hungarian or Roma, because behind the children there are always the parents as well. And... and...and...children show what they bring from home. So the parents are like the children too. When I talk to teachers and say that there is a problem with the child because the kid is rude, untidy or something like that, then the teacher says that there is nobody to talk to because the parents act the same.*

*So it is something like when you say that there is no one to talk to because they bring it from home, so it is no use reforming the school system because they were super Roma teachers. The problem starts in the mornings when you should clean them and show them that this is the knife, the fork, the toilet roll. But when they go home then it will be the same, that is, the whole family milieu. So no, it is not so simple... let's integrate the Roma children when they bring it [their bad habits] from home. It will not be supported from home either because the mother will not say that...*

In summary: according to the majority-competitive focal group, the exclusion of the Roma can be accepted because *they* do not want to be integrated – neither the children (despite the statement that, “*it is totally the same... whether they are Hungarian or Roma,*” it can be clearly read from the text that here it is the Roma we are talking about) nor the parents. Benefits are not enough for them either because they do not use them properly, they can only misuse them. In this context, it is the Roma who do not really seem to want to be integrated into the majority society or for the majority to integrate them. This opinion clearly suggests that the current practice cannot be blamed for being exclusive. It is only the Roma who can be blamed (and are blamed by the interviewee), as discrimination is caused by the Roma themselves.

In the above – implicitly or mainly explicitly – the correct order to be followed was stated. This order regulates rational behaviour. While the moral order is being stated, communication elements parallel with it are being formed that illustrate the othering of the Roma. In the discourse of exclusion the Roma are outside the moral order. Not trapped outside (not victims, not the sufferers of the process), but rather located outside voluntarily. The responsibility is obviously *theirs*. The majority society tries to do their best to help them, but the destructive

behaviour of the Roma appears at all levels and ages. This behaviour is blame-worthy – and the members of the focal group have passed judgement.

One of the key mechanisms of exclusion is the characterization of the Roma (or the mentally disabled, homosexuals, Jews, Arabs, etc.). Its ideal/typical characterization is that of a dirty, smelly, unclean, ill-intentioned figure, which supports an exclusive ideology.

The expressed opinions are not entirely far-fetched. Almost everybody has had their own bad experience. It is difficult to examine what it is behind that certain bad experience, we cannot see the Other's (the Roma's) motivation, the cause of their passions, as they were not and could not be examined by the interviewer either. In fact, personal negative experience and sinister stories show real fears that later will cement the claim for isolation from the Roma into a monolithic array that cannot be demolished and includes all the Roma.

*Well, in elementary school I also had a classmate with whom I used to sit at the same desk, but I got everything from him starting with lice. The others were provoking me as well, they kept spitting on me although I didn't talk to them [...] So I don't know why they feel this way, it is as if they wanted to show that they are somebody as well, or I don't know. Yes, because they also feel who they can do it to and who they cannot do it to. In Nyírbátor they did these types of things, for instance, to a girl that was walking – was not saying anything at all, and then they came opposite her and kept spitting on her and bumping into her and then they moved on. I don't know what triggers it from them. Is it how they want to stand out?*

Based on their personal perception of the probability of harm, those who want to build walls between themselves and the Roma (judged to be dangerous) might be right as well. Experiencing personal threat is not something that allows one to coolly think over the process, to wonder how the other, the aggressor – the Roma, can get to that offensive point. When one is afraid, understanding the Other is out of the question. No risk can be undertaken to let potential attackers inside the circle that has well-defined group-level knowledge.

As a defence, simple, everyday models can be created where the group-level feeling of fear and personally experienced atrocities are linked. In this light, isolation seems to be logical, and beyond this the victim's frustration also plays a part. This feeling comes from the fact that some members of the majority society do not understand this situation (e.g., social workers) and waste so much energy helping the "aggressors." Personal experience grows into a group-level rejection that triggers the wish that it would be better if the Roma did not want to live together with the majority.

*The Gypsy community always brings together a more than a hundred year old value system that in most European communities is not acceptable, it is a different one, built on Jewish,*

*Christian culture... [...] But now I would refine it a little to make this Gypsy culture more understandable, which is not any worse than ours, only today's Gypsies from their traditions, from their culture highlight and keep only what it is comfortable for them. But where are those ancient Gypsy crafts that were not done by white people because since ancient times and for centuries only Gypsy people have done them. They have died out. Because it is easier to live in another area without any work than to continue the ancient Gypsy crafts, to carve trough bowls and handmade spoons"*

(It might be suggested at this point of the interview to ask – Just how many bowls and hand made spoons are needed in today's households?). The Roma (who do have a very a special culture), after giving up their ancient crafts, do try to succeed in today's modern labour market. Their attempts are rewarded by the participants of the majority-competing focal group as shown in their statements.

*Where I work the cleaning lady is Gypsy and we always say we wish every Gypsy would be like her!*

[Interviewer:] Why? What is she like?

*She does her job very well ... she is clean ... she does not take it personally when Gypsies are cursed...*

[Interviewer:]: *Because there are people who call her Gypsy?*

*Of course, every day.*

[Interviewer:] *In spite of the fact that she works so well?*

*It is not particularly against her. We curse Gypsies only generally. This topic always arises. But she doesn't take it personally. What's more, she herself says "those shitty Gypsies." Because there is a difference between a Gypsy and a Gypsy. It was on the radio that they said there were more cultural Gypsies and more educated Gypsies and they said they would like to isolate themselves.*

[Interviewer:] *Because they feel shame?*

*They don't feel shame.*

[Interviewer:] *Then why?*

*Because ... they try to catch up. And want to isolate themselves from those who live down and don't want to work, only to live on our fat... sorry... so that they too clutch their heads [in frustration]. But here everything is ruined because the government pays them not to work.*

The ideology of exclusion, too, accepts that there are good Roma, who are good workers and work well. However, this is not the only thing we can see from the above statements. We can also see that the Roma cleaning lady does not take it personally if the others curse Gypsies, and this is seen very favourably.

*We also have a cleaning lady at the kitchen, she is painstaking too, she goes to all the doctors to clean, she is reliable, there is nothing bad in her work but...she is still a Gypsy. She works normal work hours, nobody has problems with her work.*

Here is another Roma woman, who works precisely, cleans nicely. That vague phrase “*but...but she is still Roma*” is clearly heard in the heart of the sentence. It was not easy for the focal group to discard these words from the example of the nice Roma cleaning woman.

[Interviewer:] *And if that Roma cleaning lady you were talking about would get a chance to study and to not have to work as a cleaning lady, then how do you think she would do it?*

*They do study because she had to complete a course to be a cleaning lady. Because it is an EU regulation and she was obliged to complete it. She has such a way of thinking and so does her husband and kids, so this is why I say that there is a difference between a Gypsy and a Gypsy.*

In an open world, a Roma who is able to perform quality work could study so that she or he could become something other than a cleaning lady/janitor. However, the experience is that if the Roma study, they study to become cleaning ladies. Here is the invisible glass ceiling that discourages anyone who would like to break through it in an effective way.

The term “glass ceiling” has been in use for some decades to describe the slow progress in general of the career paths of women. Women, with the same qualifications, have a significantly weaker working career than men, e.g., many fewer women can be found in managerial positions. Women’s occupational advancement is clearly hindered by external (social, and even sexist) obstacles (Powell 1988), but the social discourse, conducted mostly by men, place this responsibility onto women (“she” is “not so suitable”).

Due to its similar mechanisms (well-positioned slowing at the level of lower jobs, external social and racist barriers, responsibility-projection, striving for system-justification) the glass ceiling phrase has been used to characterize the labour-market situation of the Roma. A glass ceiling differs from other factors hindering advancement, for example, from the lack of professional experience or poor education. The essence of the glass ceiling is that although it cannot be seen from the outside (it is “glass”), it blocks the possibility for the advancement of those who belong to a discriminated group. This invisible barrier exists even if it is not confirmed officially – there are no advertisements that contain: “those who belong to minorities need not apply.”

How do the Roma appear in the discourse about breaking through this glass ceiling?

*We have a policeman, who... who is Gypsy [...] Well, he demands papers on public roads and people are reluctant to give him their documents ...[...]. It is not good [that a Gypsy becomes a policeman]. Because he has that style [public shout: “that temperament!”], from where he grew up and he takes it with him.*

On the recording the utterance “...*who is Gypsy*” is accompanied by a heavy sigh that can be easily heard. How hard it is to say a Roma can be a policeman? Perhaps the problem is with being a *policeman*. According to the interviewee, Roma policemen do not get on well with other policemen – and not vice versa. If Roma policemen take action and the citizens consider them Roma and not policemen, such a situation creates tension. In the text of the interview the arguments why the Roma people cannot work as police seem to be logical, they are seen to be objective, but we bump into this same glass ceiling with qualified individuals in other workplaces as well.

Exclusion from the labour market and the glass ceiling within the frame of contemptuous prejudice created by a competing group in a threatened position are exclusively imposed on the Roma as a group. In the discourse of exclusion, such workplace discrimination is “clearly” the consequence of the behaviour of the Roma. Belief in a fair world receives confirmation when those who are struck by such bad things deserve them.

[Interviewer:] *M. has just said that those Roma policemen who are inside the police force [...] do not really get on well with the policemen themselves, and if a Roma policeman goes to a simple citizen to enforce rules then they do not consider him to be a policeman but a Gypsy and they create tension. Then there is the cleaning lady who works properly. I could go on – for example, would a Roma nursery school employee be accepted in the group?*

*I don't think so.*

[Question of a group member] *Would you accept her as a colleague?*

*I would.*

[Interviewer:] *But you said she would not be good.*

*No. She would not be good...because the parents have expectations of her personality as well. Say she can be similar too [...]. I don't know I don't know. The truth is that there are really nice people among them, really very nice, but in common knowledge, that is among us, the Gypsies are thought to be like that by common knowledge, so they can do nearly everything, they can access everything, and they are bossy to!*

[Interviewer:] *What do you mean?*

*Well...when they enter a shop, they will surely go to the front, it will not bother him that there are five more people already in the queue.*

When the interviewee spoke about the explanations that hinder (or make it impossible) for the Roma to work as caregivers in nurseries, he hesitated and stopped. He looked for the words. He looked for *the most suitable explanation for the audience* (Tileaga, 2005). As it was quite difficult to find it in the given situation (the expectations of the interviewer are not known), the quotation of the stakeholders gave him a way out – “*because the parents have expectations*” – and

so the stop was followed by a louder explanation. The glass ceiling in the case of the Roma policeman can be explained as well:

*... it is not good they will become too powerful, just imagine the Gypsy policeman, he would not hurt one of his own but one of us!*

### **The detective mirror**

The detective mirror is a special sheet of glass where we can see ourselves as in a mirror but when the light is lit in the room behind it, then it behaves as a window and we can see those who are on its other side. Some elements of the ideology of exclusion work just like the detective mirror. During the interviews, two approaches immediately came into view regarding opinions about the school system (Hüse, 2011). In one part of the discussion, the interviewers raised the topic of the school system in general. In another part of the discussion the school performance of Roma students and integration was discussed with the groups. This resulted in an interesting dichotomy, not only in the competing-anxious group, but equally in the case of the other interviewees as well.<sup>1</sup>

When seeing themselves and their children – looking into the mirror – the interviewees believe the present school system is not good. Its main problem is, they think, that it is not practice-oriented and insufficiently child-centered. It tends to teach material that is not appropriate to the age of the children. Schools do not serve to maintain the survival of the middle-class and the re-conquering of the lost positions by the second generation. “Children,” according to the focus groups meant “our children,” i.e., partly children with the average abilities of the majority society and partly their own children. In this light they see the following problems:

- School provides too much theoretical knowledge, it is not practice oriented;
- The knowledge the children obtain cannot be used in the labour market;
- It demands a knowledge level that is not suitable for age-specificity and abilities, and the situation is getting worse;
- The pace is too fast and the children do not have time to understand the material;
- Because of the lack of a long-term educational policy, the variety of the textbooks schools use is untraceable, incomprehensible;

---

<sup>1</sup> In this part of this text, for reasons of space, the results of the research are for the most part summarized without illustrations from interviews.

- The teachers are overburdened, they do not have authority; and
- The school and its surroundings are full of dangerous peer-groups.

The opinion of the interviewees is that the schools are in a very difficult situation. To overcome the obstacles in the school, the role of the family was stressed:

*Because I help my child, actually I would like to tell you, because I see it, because it is the experience, that the appropriate power and economic relations of the parents. ...and that the background should be strong. From then on the child can fly.*

When the interview turns to the matter of whether the integration of Roma children in the school can help solve their social problems of lagging behind, the other side of the detective mirror is lit, where the “Others” and not “us” exist. Opinions on this are sharply different in the group threatened with sliding down in social status than in the group whose members do not have to face this threat.

In the majority-competitive group the unanimous opinion is that institutional integration is not a good thing, it causes more harm than good. According to the non-competing, higher-qualified group and according to the members of the employer group, integration is useful and practical, although it should be more rationally implemented. As the majority-competitive group examined the school system from the point of view of the Roma children, they described a sharply different picture than when this question was approached from the point of view of “our children.” One perhaps less obvious difference is that while in the first case the (negative) stress is on the school and children and families are barely mentioned, in the second case stress is on the children and the families and it is the school that is scarcely mentioned. Despite the neutrality of the question, the interviews turned into a kind of “problem-finding” forum and faults and dysfunctions were discussed, the extreme asymmetry of the discussion of these two topics perfectly shows the existence of a double standard, or the other side of the detective mirror.

According to the interviewees, from the point of view of integrating Roma students the school and the teachers are:

- basically well-prepared to help the enrolled children to be useful members of society, including both the transfer of useful knowledge and their socialization; but
- through no fault of its own the school is not able to cope with either the negative tendencies represented by the Roma families or the general characteristics of the Roma children.

Although it is not stated that the school demands a knowledge level appropriate to the specific age, the cause of the school failure of Roma children is explained



solely by cultural, behavioural and other characteristics, and the indirect consequence for examining the requirements of the school system is based on the viewpoint that the direction of the system seems to be correct, and that, although unstated, the pace of school is suitable (there is enough time for both the teachers and the children). The reason that the Roma children lag behind is explained by their typically slow pace and with the explanation that there is no time to compensate for this, thus, the conclusion is that there is enough time for non-compensatory forms of education and for processing and understanding the material.

Finally, we are explained that the teachers basically have authority, but are not able to enforce this authority with the Roma children and their parents.

It can immediately be seen that a double standard is present not only in the weight of the discussion of the topics but in the discussion of the causes of the failures as well. To the neutral question – “What is the contemporary Hungarian school like?” – the answers were only negative. This does not necessarily mean that there are only problems with the schools today, but it does mean that the public discourse on educational policy and the schools has moved towards negative extremes. Today to ask what the school system (or the health care or the social system) is like means the same as asking, “What is the *problem* with the school system?” And so while discussing about the school system generally – that is from the point of view of “our children” – the interviewees present an openly critical viewpoint against the school system. However, talking about it from the point of view of the Roma children, they represent a defensive, accepting point of view. Something that was obviously bad and dysfunctional at the beginning of the conversation is suddenly exalted, because it was placed into a different relationship within a different system.

This relationship is within the ideology of the system of exclusion.

### **Overcoming stereotypes – the first step towards terminating exclusion**

Due to low qualifications, unemployment and ethnic discrimination, the Roma have become the most marginalized social group in Hungary during the decades following the political transformations. According to international data, children whose parents have been socially excluded are more likely to be excluded themselves in their future life (Esping-Andersen, 2002) and reversing these negative processes should be started immediately.

The starting point for this research was that exclusion manifests itself in well-defined complex behaviour. It is typical of exclusion that through the

development of negative stereotypes and stigmatization, it can also occur in situations where the characters have good intentions, where they are not exclusive at all and are not aware that with the inclusion of widespread stereotypes their behaviour and communication become exclusive.

As ever scarcer resources and strangeness increase competition (also considering statistical probability), planned and well-shared cooperation, solidarity and altruism decrease. The technique of cooperation can be applied effectively in school surroundings, and can even be used to prevent tragedies like school massacres caused by prejudices and exclusion (Aronson, 2000), or to simply run a truly effective school with no discrimination or violence. However, the initial drive should be to overcome stereotypes, since the origin of exclusion is the development of negative stereotypes.

As has been discussed earlier, stereotypes make it easier for an individual to have opinions about the issues of the world. By using stereotypes an individual can save cognitive energy. It is impossible to give up stereotypes completely, but it is possible to decrease their importance. One way is to make a conscious effort to look for inconsistent information between individuals and stereotypes which will then decrease prejudice. It is true that stereotypes are resistant to change, but under appropriate circumstances they can be overcome when one meets directly with one or more members of the stereotyped group and is faced with so-called inconsistent information (information that is not compatible with the applied stereotype). Then, with this clear awareness, the process of change can start (Smith & Mackie, 2007). The table below shows the four steps and levels of this change and the ways stereotypes can be maintained or discarded.

Table 2: The "fate" of information that is not compatible with the stereotype

Efforts made to protect stereotype	Steps of processing inconsistent information	Change or termination of the stereotype
The information is explained	1	The information is too much to be explained
A new sub-type is created	2	The information is true to too many group members to be a sub-group
An inconsistent person is thought to not be typical	3	The information arrives from typical group members
↓ Stereotype activates		↓ The person decides to not base judgments on stereotypes

Source: Smith and Mackie (2007).

Using the above “recipe” for the reduction of stereotypes, i.e., frequent and personal intercourse among the members of the different groups in circumstances that are likely to avoid competition and strengthen cooperation, the relationship has a chance to become general and permanent, and there is a possibility of forming a friendly, acceptable and solid atmosphere where these feelings may extend to other, not personally known members of the group.

## References

- Aronson, Eliot (2000): *Nobody Left to hate: Teaching Compassion After Columbine*. New York, W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Denmark, Florence L. (2010): Prejudice and Discrimination. In: Weiner, I. B.; Craighead, W. E. [eds.]. *The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology*. Volume Three (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, John Wiley. 1276–1277.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (2002): A Child-Centered Social Investment Strategy. In: Esping-Andersen, G., Gallie, D., Hemerjick, A., Myles, J. [eds.]: *Why We Need A New Welfare State*. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford. 26–68.
- Fiske, Susan T., Cuddy, Amy C., Glick, Peter, Xu, Jun (2002): A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 878–902.
- Fiske, Susan T. (1998): Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination. In: Gilbert, D. T.; Fiske, S. T.; Lindzey, G. [eds.]. *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. Volume Two (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, McGraw-Hill. 357–411.
- Gans, Herbert J. (1992): Über die positiven Funktionen der unwürdigen Armen. In: Leibfried, S., Voges, W [eds.]: *Armut im modernen Wohlfahrtsstaat*. Opladen, Westdt. Verl., 48–62.
- Hüse Lajos (2011): Kettős mérce az iskola szerepének megítélésében – egy kirekesztés-kutatás margójára. *Iskolakultúra*, 2011/1, 88–98.
- Hüse Lajos (2008): A kirekesztés diskurzusa. *Kapocs*, VII/5, 2–23.
- Jost, John T., Hunyady Orsolya (2002): The psychology of system justification and the palliative function of ideology. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 13, 111–153.
- Kemény István, Janky Béla (2003): A cigányok foglalkoztatottságáról és jövedelmi viszonyairól – a 2003. évi országos cigánykutatás alapján. *Esély*, 2003/6, 58–72.
- Kertesi Gábor (2000): A cigány foglalkoztatás leépülése és szerkezeti átalakulása 1984 és 1994 között. *Közgazdasági szemle*, 47(5), 406–443.

- Lenoir, René (1974): *Les exclus: un Français sur dix*. Paris, Seuil.
- Lerner, Melvin J. (1980): *The belief in a just world: A fundamental delusion*. Plenum Press, New York.
- Powell, Gary N. (1988): *Women & Men in Management*. Sage, London.
- Pratkanis, Anthony R., Aronson, Eliot (1992): *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*. New York, W.H. Freeman and Company.
- Smith, Eliot R., Mackie, Diane M. (2007): *Socialpsychology*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. New York, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Szalai Júlia (2010): A szabadságtalanság bővülő körei. Az iskolai szegregáció társadalmi "értelméről". *Esély* 2010/3: 3–22.
- Szalai Júlia (2002): A társadalmi kirekesztődés egyes kérdései az ezredforduló Magyarországon. *Szociológiai Szemle*, 2002/4, 34–50.
- Tileaga, Cristian (2005): Accounting for extreme prejudice and legitimating blame in talk about the Romanies, *Discourse and Society*, 16(5), 603–624.